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Written on AUGUST 27, 2013 AT 3:56 PM by VKREMER

Pacific Partnership 2013 Comes to a Close

Filed under HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF U.S. NAVY

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By **Cmdr. Carolyn Currie, director, theater engagement, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery**



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Hello Friends and Family,

We are approaching the equator for the last time. In the next few days we will also be crossing the International Date Line and Equator, and will be given an opportunity to live the day we lost months ago on our journey over. There will be much fun and mischievousness as we “Wogs” become Golden Shellbacks! If you have no unearthly idea what I am talking about, I’ll explain when it’s all over!

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We have completed all of our engagements for Pacific Partnership 2013. We are exhausted, sunburned, aching for some fresh vegetables, a large soft mattress and the folks back home. We ended the mission with an incredible ceremony commemorating the 71st anniversary of Guadalcanal at the place where it all happened. Our Marines, Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen all took part in the moving ceremony at sunrise on the hill above the harbor in Honiara (Guadalcanal), Solomon Islands.

We were touched when it was announced that just two weeks ago the remains of three missing Marines were found just a couple hundred feet from the memorial. Our Marines folded three flags representing each of them and placed them on the memorial. These flags will go home with the remains in a few days.

The day turned into a beautiful clear sunny and breezy morning. It was bittersweet traveling back on the Landing Craft Utility (LCU) for the last time; watching the sun dance on the water as we headed to the USS Pearl Harbor to begin the journey across the Pacific. We won't be touching land again until we reach Hawaii. My only hope is to see more dolphins along the way and to get an opportunity to go swimming in a pool so large, there is no land to be seen for 360 degrees.

There are no more planning meetings, no more manifests to write, no more early morning musters for the LCU, no more late night packing for the next day's adventures. All of the embarked personnel will fill the hours with rummy, spades, movies, reading and story-telling. But not me ... no this is when my work begins. As the Medical Assessments Officer, I will be arranging all the data collected for analysis, writing after action reports and submitting lessons learned. I am excited to return to DC and apply all I have learned and experienced to my work in the Global Health Engagement Office at BUMED.

I have always heard people talk about Pacific Partnership and Continuing Promise being "life changing missions". Now I truly know what they mean. I have been blessed with a supportive family and team at work who have stood the watch while I have been away. My only regret is that I have not spent more time at sea during my career. I love the rocking of the ship at night, the balmy breeze on the flight deck, watching the stars touch the horizons, waking to the greeting of dolphins swimming along with us, the camaraderie of the USS Pearl Harbor Crew and PP13 Team, and of course touching the lives of people in the far corners of the Pacific.

It will be several more days until we pull into port in Pearl Harbor, and I will be spending a couple of days there meeting with the assessments team. This will likely be my last entry on the mission. I hope you have enjoyed my updates and we will talk soon!

Cheers,

Carolyn

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